

# FCC Consumer Advisory

## Using Your Cell Phone on Airplanes

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is considering new rules that may eventually allow you to use your own cell phone or wireless data device on airplanes after take off. Currently, cell phone users generally are permitted to use their phones before takeoff and after landing. FCC rules currently ban cell phone use after a plane has taken off because of potential interference to cellular phone networks on the ground. In addition, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has rules prohibiting in-flight cell phone use because of potential interference to navigation and aircraft systems.

The FCC has proposed new rules that would allow you to use your cellular and other wireless devices in airborne aircraft as a means to increase communication options available to the traveling public and to increase communication options to public safety personnel. The FCC cautioned, however, that any steps it ultimately takes concerning the use of cellular and other wireless devices aboard aircraft would be subject to the rules and policies of the FAA and aircraft operators. The FCC is coordinating closely with the FAA to ensure that FCC rules and policies complement the FAA's efforts and address issues unique to wireless service providers subject to the FCC's authority.

### What Is the FCC Proposing?

The FCC is proposing rules to permit the airborne operation of "off the shelf" wireless handsets and other devices under the following conditions:

- The device operates at its lowest power setting under control of a "pico cell," which is a very small specialized cellular base station installed onboard the aircraft; and
- The operation does not interfere with on-ground users.

Many passenger airplanes are now equipped with special seatback-mounted Airfones that enable passengers to make air-to-ground calls. The FCC has recently approved rules that will allow airlines to offer high-speed Internet service over the radio frequencies currently used by these seatback phones.

It should be noted that any use of personal electronic devices, including all phones and other portable electronic devices (PEDs) like pagers, blackberries, portable music players, video games, and computers will remain subject to the FAA's authority over safety of flight.



All of these proposed rule changes are aimed at increasing the communication options for wireless users – in this case, airborne connectivity – while ensuring there is no increased risk of harmful interference to cellular systems on the ground. The ultimate objective is to give consumers the choice to use their own wireless devices during flight.

For further information, visit [http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DOC-255246A1.doc](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-255246A1.doc) or contact the FCC's Consumer Call Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice, or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY.

###

*For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to [FCC504@fcc.gov](mailto:FCC504@fcc.gov).*

*To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on [www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html).*

*This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.*

050111

